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The COLLECTOR

AND ART CRITIC

With Which is Combined "Art & Life"

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EDITORS

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EDITORIAL SECTION

WE may gratefully acknowledge that the reception of this, the first ten cent art magazine ever put upon the market, has been most gratifying. The November number is completely sold out and future orders can only be filled from the date of subscription. The Velasquez "Aesop" on the November cover seems to have struck a popular chord. It is our intention to give each month a reproduction of a famous masterpiece by one of the old painters, and preferably a head. The one on this December number is the "Man with Glove" by Titian, one of the gems of the Louvre. The January cover will have the "Jester" by Frans Hals. Thus a collection will be provided of surpassing interest.

Arrangements have been made so that future subscribers will receive the complete set of these cover reproductions of Old Masters, as we shall print a limited number of proofs of each of these fine plates, without any printing and suitable for framing. New subscribers will receive without charge—as long as they last!—these proofs of the covers of any issue which we may not be able to supply them with. Others who desire the proofs may obtain them for the nominal price of twenty-five cents each, postpaid.

The following advertisement appeared recently in the "For Sale" columns of our pink afternoon sheet: "Certain prize winner for any exhibition; best sunset

painted in years; will be left unsigned for any one wishing to enter it; for sale at once."

This is the worst calumny that has been put on the profession in many a day. The fraud who inserted that advertisement will be sadly disappointed if he imagines that anyone will snap at his bait. The enormous conceit of this person, who will leave unsigned "the best sunset painted in years," is a monument of egregious egotism, but it serves to call our attention to the fact that now is the time when the frauds commence to go about. A warning at the beginning of the season may be useful.

Reports are going the rounds of the perennial pilgrimage of a so-called illustrators, or newspaper artists society, which has already sent out notices of exhibitions to be held in a score of large cities all over the country. I believe it recently opened its campaign in Baltimore.

The confederates who work this scheme are advised by a smart New York lawyer, who enables them to keep within the limits of the law and out of the hands of the District Attorney. They go to the leading art lovers in the cities they have selected and pretend to represent the newspaper artists of the country or even specifically those on the local papers. They solicit subscriptions—"to help the boys along"—of one or more hundreds of dollars, or less, for they take what they can get, and they offer to allow the victim

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to select from their exhibition the value of his subscription. The "black-and-whites" have been picked up in artists' studios for a mere song and are priced at ten times their value. No artist aside from the artistic confederates in this fraudulent scheme ever receives the least benefit from these sales. The New York Society of Illustrators have time and again endeavored to rout these road gentlemen, but they still seem to be going the rounds.

Then there is the peripatetic picture dealer, who drives up to the house with a wagonload of paintings—generally bogus. A Western subscriber some time ago sent me three canvases to pass upon which he had bought from one of these gentry. The paintings were barefaced frauds, and a suit is now pending against the swindler. Even such a well-known collector as Francis Wilson was taken in last year by a man named Collins who had foisted on him a fake Mauve. Some years ago I had something to do with the exposure of a man who had been doing Rochester, N. Y., under the name of Parsons, and a full record was given in these columns of the machinations of a certain Leopold, who was working in partnership with a man named Weston.

This notorious Leopold is still seen occasionally on New York's streets in company with a Sixth avenue pawnbroker, in whose shop window hangs the alluring sign, "Gallery of \$1,000 paintings inside." These paintings are probably the remnant of the unfortunate Folts collection, which was on exhibition in the old "Doge's Palace" on West Twenty-third street some eight years ago. It was a collection like many others that are formed either through the chicanery or the ignorance of so-called art collectors. This kind of a collection reminds me of Longfellow's poem "How the Ship was Built"—it floats along until the sun of publicity shines upon the crazy craft, when the seams start and the hulk becomes waterlogged and founders, *sic transit*—

Still another instance of barefaced deception was seen the other day in a

department store that boasts a row of screens hung with impossible daubs and dubbed "The Art Gallery." Among the many glaring products of the painter's brush hang some canvases showing Arabs on the march, after the familiar subjects which Adolph Schreyer turned out. These are copies of genuine pictures by the late German artist and they are signed H. Schreyer—although on the frame the stenciling reads W. Schreyer—but the salesman will tell you with unction and truth, but nevertheless mendaciously, that "a veritable Schreyer" may be had for \$29.99. But he will fail to tell you to what poor relation of A. Schreyer the insufferable pasquil should be criminally charged. Of course, it will be all the same to the department store art "kunooser." He will at least get a handsome frame, with real gold leaf, and the color on the canvas will match to perfection the red-and-blue painted cast of an Italian boy playing a flute standing on the parlor mantel, and the floss silk in the antimacassar that hangs over the back of the easy chair in the corner. Thus art is ever with him.

And now comes to my desk a flood of circulars, forwarded to me by artists, of a certain Lenox Art Gallery in Harlem. The scheme may be all right and the originators perfectly honest, but the method is very peculiar. The artists are invited to send with their pictures a one dollar entrance fee. The circular explaining the scheme is very funny and worth quoting from (*verbally*):

"The Lenox Art Academy will have the principle point in view 'A fair deal to all Artists.'

"Pictures shall and will not be judged by its name but by its merit only.

"Names on the Pictures should be pasted over, or veiled in some way. Paintings not before publicly exhibited will be excepted for the Exhibition, after it has been approved by the Jury of Admission.

"A silver medal will be awarded for the best painting in the Exhibition.

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"A testimonial of Honor to the next best painting.

"The Jury will be announced later.

"Excepted Pictures cannot be removed until after the exhibition is closed.

"A fee of one dollar is required for every picture that is excepted as hanging fee, if not excepted the fee of one dollar will be returned."

And more to the same ungrammatical effect.

The much heralded art emporium on Thirty-fourth street to be opened by "Pat" Sheedy, has had the right kind of initial advertising in the mix-up about a lot of pictures consigned by Sheedy to a restaurant keeper in Hartford, Connecticut—presumably to form part of Sheedy's stock in trade. But it was a sorry lot of paintings, many not worth \$10.00 each.

Which is a fit commentary on the previous announcement of Mr. Sheedy's press agent that at last the ignorant rich would be taught the true merit of genuine old masters.

All this leads me to point anew to the necessity of guidance for the first steps of the beginner in art purchasing.

In the first place, do not buy trashy things signed by Italian or French names you never heard of. Let me tell you an incident to show what these names sometimes mean. A few months ago I stumbled into an artist's studio, situated under a small framemaker's shop. He was a bright, good looking young fellow, and he was industriously at work on a small chicken picture in the style of Jacque's barnyard compositions; a dozen similar paintings were standing about finished. On taking up a few I noticed they were signed with three different French-sounding names. At my look of surprise the young fellow ingenuously and frankly explained, "What would you? I can't sell these things if they are signed with my own name, which nobody ever heard of. They are good enough in a way, but if people think they are getting French

pictures they will pay more for them. All the pictures in this lot are going West, but I *have* sold a number at auction places right here in New York and I got good prices for them.—Well, those names! *Ma foi*, writers use *noms de plume*; I use *noms de pinceau*."

Surely a case of complicated morality with far reaching ramifications.

Read regularly a good art magazine, one that will give you the names of American and foreign artists that are worthy of consideration, and tells you the why and wherefore of good art. Don't expect to learn anything by one article. The subject is too big for that, but the other day, when dining with a friend at his club, he took me to a small painting of beautiful tonality hanging in one of the parlors, and said, "Do you know, that after reading *THE COLLECTOR* for a year I have learned to like this picture?" It was a queer way of putting it, but this very active business man was trying to express the fact that theoretic instruction had helped him in his practical endeavors to develop his appreciation of art.

Take advice in buying pictures, if you are not confident of your own judgment. And right here let me say that artists are not the best mentors in forming a collection of paintings or even in making occasional purchases. Their advice will invariably reflect the tendency of their own work and cannot be regarded as broad enough for approval of meritorious work that does not run along their own lines. Even in the purchase of modern paintings I would prefer the word of a reliable dealer to that of an artist. In the purchase of old masters the advice of the reliable dealer is still more valuable. In London, for instance, is Mr. Charles Dowdeswell, a well-known dealer and one of the best living judges of the early Italian and Spanish Schools. I once spent a morning with him in the New York Historical Society collection, when he was on a visit here, and the expert knowledge which he displayed was astounding. When this

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knowledge is combined with strict integrity, as it is in his case, the result is one of the best advisers to be had. So we have in New York dealers of equal worth, men who *know*, and who do not purchase for themselves anything of which they are not sure, hence they are safe guides for others.

Richard Watson Gilder has recently emphasized anew his advocacy of the propaganda of the Boston Free Art League—the more's the pity. Why can he not see that the limitation of the duty to a maximum of \$100 answers every demand he makes, and still protects the artists who ask for protection?

When our eminent mural painter, Kenyon Cox, assuming to represent in his own person the entire art fraternity, cries out, "For heaven's sake stop protecting us!" he goes off at a tangent. The artists who signed the petition of the Free Art League, had submitted to them only the alternative between the present repulsive tariff and absolutely free art—and of course chose the latter. I am sure, however, that the majority would prefer the 20% duty on all works of art up to a value of \$500 and a specific duty of \$100 on anything above that amount. If the Free Art League really wants to know the sentiment of the artists, why not submit *this* proposition to the artists of the country and to American artists residing abroad? I will warrant that they would be surprised at the result.

That the "Free Art League" is weakening is evidenced by the admission made by Mr. Carroll Beckwith, one of its spokesmen, who admits the possibility of a compromise to a fifty years clause, giving free entry only to works of art produced before 1855. This admission leaves the Free Art people without their strongest argument, that the educational value of good art is the basis of their pleading—for lots of good art of educational value has been produced within the last fifty years that would still be penalized for entering this country, did this compromise prevail, while shiploads of old trash against

which the artists demanded protection would be admitted free.

The Free Art League, when it is willing to compromise, should come over to the stand of *THE COLLECTOR*, which from the first has advocated *Free Art* of all times, if it has educational value, but shuts out the trash with a *nominal* duty of 20%, with a maximum limit of \$100 for the duty on any single picture or other work of art.

We have advocated this, not as a compromise, but as the only sensible adjustment of the question, as it affords protection where it is needed, and still leaves art virtually free.

It is not too late to take steps to have this measure presented to the Congress now in session, and carried to a satisfactory conclusion.

It is a sign of the times, an indication of how the art sense is growing in the requirements of civilization, that we see everywhere the desire for Interior Decoration, where formerly but special places were selected for elaborate furnishings and finish. Wherever people gather in large numbers it is a first *desideratum* that the surroundings shall be beautiful—not glaring or loud, but artistically beautiful. Music halls, clubrooms, hotel and restaurant dining-rooms, cafés, all are arranged to gratify good taste and add to the enjoyment of visitors by giving pleasure to the eye. Such mural decorations are becoming more and more artistic and generally introduced.

It is not so with the Interior Decoration of private houses.

I will not charge Americans with snobbishness, but why is it—whereas we may justly claim as American characteristics, originality and the power of invention—that in the decorating of homes the most absurd and confusing servitude is displayed to foreign example? We have Empire, Louis XV, Louis XVI, Old English rooms—often all jumbled together in one house with a varied assortment of bric-a-brac and knick-knacks

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ranging from Egyptian antiques to the commercial bronzes of *l'art nouveau*.

Art is a growth, a development. Have we nothing in this country distinctively American that could form the basis of a present day American style of interior decoration?

We have this basis in the Colonial period—an American tradition; an outgrowth, forsooth, of an English style, but yet distinctively local and native. Its main thought is quietness. You feel this when you enter the drawing rooms of an old Virginian or Carolinian homestead. And there is in New York an apartment that is an echo of these days of stately coziness. The low old chairs with green baize covering, the polished mahogany tables, some solid and weighty, others spiderlike, but both kinds strong—it all gives you the impression of dignified comfort.

Compare this with one of the junk shops, called a parlor, where one has to put his coat tails in his pocket for fear of knocking off the stuffed monkeys and figurines which crawl all over impossible cabinets and show-tables; where one cannot sit down without a Japanese screen dropping on his head and entangling his feet in a bearskin; where a photograph of Murillo's "Conception" hangs alongside of Venice's Bridge of Sighs in garish color print, which is flanked by a more or less genuine Corot and some stilted fisher-girls by Hagborg.

Interior Decoration is an art that needs developing in this country. We will endeavor in successive numbers to indicate the lines along which we should work.

The project to hold a Sculpture Salon here in the fall of 1907 should be carried out. It would show at last in a comprehensive way what American sculpture really can produce, and it would be a stimulus to the plastic art in this country of far-reaching influence.

The National Sculpture Society, which has this matter in charge, proves by this project that it is emerging from its policy

of a close corporation, commission distributing agency, which was the blight of former administrations.

The members of the exhibition committee comprise Karl Bitter, Daniel C. French, Herbert Adams, Thomas Hastings and Solon H. Borglum. J. Scott Hartley, the secretary of the society, is also enthusiastically working for this Salon, which with the aid of Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, may prove, like the portrait show of some years ago, a social as well as a financial success.

So many large pieces have been offered that it is proposed to utilize Madison Square Garden as the show place. Many equestrian statues will be shown, as well as decorative work for state buildings, and also for home and garden sculpture, seats, sundials, well-heads and gate-posts and the like. Some of our animal sculptors will have a splendid opportunity to demonstrate their ability, and the work of Roth, the Borglums, Miss Hyatt and a few others will have a better setting than ever before.

An article appeared in the May number in which I berated the lazy parasites which fasten themselves on the artists' profession and drag this honorable calling down, so that the mere name "artist" puts a man on the defensive to prove his willingness and ability to work for a living.

A correspondent of a Kansas City journal, now residing in this Western city, apparently has read this article, for he gives an amusing instance of the seamy side of the artist's life:

"Here is the case of a young man, every step of whose artistic career in New York I watched with interest.

"He had come out of the West and his sole claim to artistic training was a year's study with an old painter in Washington, D. C., after which he came to New York to try his luck.

"He wanted to paint portraits. At the start he took a hall bedroom in a fashionable boarding house and did his work

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there, his landlady, the kindest of women, permitting him to stand some of his pictures in her drawing room and letting him run up a big board bill. Things would have gone hard with the young man but for a fellow boarder, a woman, who was acquainted with a society woman who cared a good deal for pictures and was pretty enough to enjoy having her portrait painted.

"This woman took no end of pains to bring the painter and the society woman together, and finally induced the latter to come and look at the portraits displayed at the boarding house. The woman came, saw and didn't care a rap for the pictures, but invited the artist to come and look at a portrait of her which had been painted by a well-known artist.

"That was the beginning. The end was that in less than one year the young man had a studio of his own, where he exhibited a life-size portrait of his patron, together with several others, including one of Lady So-and-So, then on a visit to America.

"A year later the young artist was spending the winter abroad, the letters of introduction of Lady So-and-So giving him a chance to do enough work in London to pay his way.

"Now had this young man shown signs of high talent his quick rise would not have caused me any wonder. But with few exceptions his work was commonplace, as a proof of which I may say that after a few years of steadily increasing fortune he remained stationary and then sank to the level where he belonged. 'Today he is making a living, but no more.'

This is a true story, for I have a pretty fair idea who the man is whose career is described. His case is not isolated. Philanthropically inclined persons will take pity on a struggling painter and through social influence push into prominence a man unworthy of the dole.

Artists are not always intent upon letting their lasting fame rest on the solid merit which is reached by work, work.

They often seek in devious ways to find a short-cut to plethoric pocketbooks. Incompetents are invariably conscious of their incompetency and often endeavor by slick methods—sometimes with the assistance of the wily space writer—to woo from the fickle goddess her auriferous favors. By scheming, toadying and wire-pulling they gain recognition from foolish folk whose vanity is tickled and who do not know enough to see that their patronage is unworthily bestowed.

On the other hand, many of our best men have been helped at the start and could never have attained to their present development but for timely aid received at the beginning of their career. Some years ago I took a subscriber to the studio of a young fellow who was ripe to be sent abroad for further study. He is now one of the most promising landscape painters we have today, and his early patron looks with justifiable pride on the good work which has been the direct result of his generosity.

Here is a good story from Albert Groll, the artist whose latest work has been on exhibition at the Schaus gallery on Fifth avenue.

While tramping in Arizona last summer with painting kit, looking for sketching ground, he passed an adobe house in which a squaw-man lived. The artist entered and asked whether he could get a glass of milk.

"Why, yes; I can let you have a glass of goat's milk, if you like it."

After his refreshment and some talk, Groll asked:

"Well, what is the bill?"

"Oh, never mind that; you can paint me a little picture for it."

One of the best definitions of the word *connoisseur* was given the other day by William Sartain:

"A man who knows enough about art to buy a good thing when it is cheap."

There is a world of meaning in this epigram.